1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
SA19 Talamanca SA19



axes, machetes, cotton cloth, &c. They never travel alone; always two or more going in company. This is a very prudent measure, since accidents are liable to happen, like snake-bites, or a bad fall, and a person alone and disabled in these wilds, would be more than apt to die before he would be discovered. The preparations for a trip into the forest are simple, but require time. If there are no plantains to be found in the neighborhood to which they are going, a large supply is collected. They are skinned, boiled, and dried hard in the smoke of a slow fire. This is to diminish the weight. A sufficient supply of corn is ground and made into a paste, either with or without the admixture of ripe plantain, for chicha. This is done up in bundles of about a gallon and a half in bulk, carefully wrapped in large leaves and tied with strips, torn from the footstalk of the plantain leaf. At last, all being ready, every person loaded with all he or she can carry, they start out, the loads done up in as compact a bulk as possible and carried on the back, suspended from the forehead by a strip of *mastate*, or bark cloth. Each person also carries in the hand a staff, four or five feet long, made of some tough wood. For ordinary purposes, the entire trunk of certain slender palm trees is used. This makes a stick about as thick as an ordinary civilized walking stick, but very strong, and sufficiently elastic to yield a little without breaking. The chiefs and a few other persons of consequence, like the priests, usually carry a stick of the red wood described above. This is neither so strong nor so light as the palm stick, but it is a privilege of rank, and is preferred in consequence. If the party is going on a trading trip—while the stronger members carry the load of sarsaparilla or rubber, still there are always some, either women or boys, who carry the inevitable bundles of chicha paste. Even when going from one house to another visiting, or to a dance, the chicha is not forgotten, unless the distance is so short that they are not liable to become thirsty on the road. On arriving at a house, the party enters without a word, and each person seats himself where most convenient, but as near the door as possible. The owner of the house, or in his absence, his wife or the next most responsible person approaches the new arrivals and salutes with, "You have come;" "I have come;" "Are you well?" "I am well, how are you?" "I am well." If a particular friend, or a person of consequence, he is invited to seat himself in a hammock. The people of less importance are allowed to take care of themselves. In a few minutes the women of the house approach with calabashes or vessels made of folded leaves full of chicha. If chocolate is to be had, it is prepared at once, and offered in place of chicha. This is a delicate attention, only shown to friends or persons of consideration. Common folks must be content with chicha. Whether chocolate or chica, it is served at least three times, at very short intervals, and at last, when you cannot swallow any more, the polite thing is to say to the person offering it, "drink it yourself," an advice usually followed, and which stops the supply. If the people are particularly inclined to be hospitable, and are fortunate enough to be well supplied, it is not uncommon for the

484 [251] [482] [481] [554] 574 [431]

l:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
SA19 Talamanca SA19



protection from the latter. Back of the fire-place are ranged the chicha jars, two or three in number. Being round bottomed, they stand on the floor propped up by stones. Scattered around the house are stools or benches, rarely more than six inches high, each carved out of a solid block of wood. They generally have four feet, though occasionally a small, roughly made one is seen, with but two feet, and which is only kept in upright position when somebody is sitting on it. The pots and kettles about the fire are all of American cast iron, and vary in size from less than a quart to ten gallons capacity. Hanging from the barbacue over the smoke, is generally seen a cocoanut shell or a leaf bundle full of salt. It is kept here because it is the only place where it will remain dry. Suspended from the roof are baskets of from one to three cubic feet capacity. They are usually made of a peculiar, very hard, and very flexible vine. These are the trunks of the people, and in them are kept their clothing and all of their little personal treasures and ornaments. They are also used for storing corn or other seeds, like beans, the basket being then lined with leaves to prevent spilling. The women also use them for carrying water calabashes. These are either gourds or the shells of the fruit of the calabash tree, with a small round hole cut in one end. One other use of the baskets is to carry loads when the net bags are scarce. These nets are also often suspended about the house in the same manner as the baskets. Axes, always of the make of Collins, of Connecticut, and long machetes, either of this or of some inferior make, are to be found in every house. Collins' hardware has gained a permanent reputation among these people, who will give twice as much for a leather handled machete of this brand, as for any other kind. Of other tools, the most noteworthy is a heavy stick sharpened to a chisel edge at one end and beveled on one side. This is used for making holes in planting corn or plantain sprouts, and the edge is used to beat down high grass. It works almost as effectually as a scythe. Hooked sticks for lifting the iron kettles, others cut with short radiating branches at the end, like a five or six pointed star, for stirring chocolate, and paddles for stirring food are always found near the fire. Calabashes and gourds with small holes cut in one end for water bottles, and other calabashes cut in half for drinking cups, are also found in every house. Food usually, and even drink sometimes, are served in leaves, called in Spanish "platanillo," smaller and tougher, but otherwise resembling those of the plantain. These are dexterously folded so as to hold a quart or more of fluid without spilling.

Of arms, besides the inevitable machete and very good double-barreled guns, they possess bows made of a very tough kind of palm wood. They are straight and usually about five feet long. The string is made of the finer kind of *agave* fibre. The arrows are of three kinds. All have a butt two and a half to three feet long, made from the light flower stalk of the wild cane. This is a mass of pith, with a thin hard shell on the outside, giving the requisite stiffness. They are not feathered. The

1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
SA19 Talamanca SA19



622 301 [727] [422] to the reigning chief. The others were formerly also property of the chiefs, but are said to have been given as rewards of merit to the most successful leaders in the Tiribi war. The two belonging to the chief, as well as one belonging to the descendants of one of those warriors, all represent birds. The people call them eagles. The largest is between three and four inches across; the smaller of the chief's two, is double-headed. In connection with these "eagles" another royal emblem might 293 be mentioned. It is a staff of hard black palm wood, over four feet long. 622 The top is carved in the shape of an animal, not unlike a bear sitting on [532] his haunches. But there are no bears in this country, and it must have been intended for some other animal. Below this figure, the stick is square, and is carved out into four pillars several inches long, with spaces between them. In the interior, between them, is a cavity in which a loose piece of the same wood can be shaken about. It was evidently left there in the carving, after the fashion of the Chinese. Below this, the stick is plain. I tried every means in my power to obtain this, but could not buy it.

525 Games of chance or of skill are equally unknown, and even when brought into contact with civilization, they do not seem to take kindly to gambling. In fact, they have so little to win or lose, and that little is so easily obtained, that the inducement does not exist.

262 Their food is simple in material and there is but little variation in the manner of preparation. Of meats, besides chickens, they have beef and pork, [257] which are however rarely used except at feasts. They know nothing of salting meat for future use and can only consume one of these animals when a large number is together. Besides the scarcity of beef is so great that probably no Indian possesses more than one or two animals at a time. [224] Wild meat, like peccary, red monkey, (the other species are rarely eaten,) tapir, tiger, even otter, armadillo, and some other small animals are oc- [251] casionally shot. In this case, all of the meat that is not eaten at once is dried as hard as a bone, and perfectly black, in the smoke of a slow fire. Larger species of birds like curassow are also treated in the same way. It is an interesting fact, universally attested, that the bones of this bird are absolutely poisonous to dogs, while the meat, though tough, is not unpalatable and is perfectly innoxious to man. After a meal it is the never-failing custom to gather all the bones carefully, and either burn them or place them out of reach of the dogs. I do not know whether the flesh would be equally dangerous, though I doubt if it was ever wasted on a dog. This property is said to be due to some fruit or seed they eat. Of vegetable food, plaintains are the staple. In times of scarcity, bananas take their place, besides being eaten raw when ripe. The Indians also occasionally eat a raw ripe plantain, although they are coarse 252 and the flavor is inferior. The methods of preparation are, roasted green, when they make a poor substitute for bread; roasted ripe, when they are eaten with chocolate, with the idea of sweetening it. They are also boiled green, with meat, with green corn, or even alone. Ripe plan-

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri



Examples of these, in both stone and pottery, were found frequently in the graves at Las Mercedes. The stirring is done with a stick called *molinillo* (pl. XIX, *e*). 415

Meat is eaten fresh, either boiled or roasted, or is dried for future consumption. 251 262

CEREMONIES

Very few ceremonies are now performed by the Bribri, and of those that survive, most are mortuary in their function. None of these ceremonies were witnessed personally, but descriptions were obtained from Ramón, and from several other Indians whose identity was not learned, as these people have a form of the taboo against mentioning their names. A so-called "ceremony," *La Chichara*, which usually precedes an important undertaking, such as house-building, seems to be nothing more than a general chicha-drinking bout. 796 [784] [273]

*Death Ceremonies.*—When a Bribri is near death, he is removed from his house to a small hut set up at a distance from the camp, because if he should die in his lodge, 763

258 is a rock-like mass with dark strata-like lines due to the ashes and sea sand. This rock salt is so hard that to procure salt for use it is necessary to scrape it with a sharp knife. A very little is sufficient as it is much stronger than ordinary salt. Rock salt, besides its general [154] use in cooking, is much sought after by sorceresses.

Occasionally, instead of making all their salt into rock salt, the *Boruca* extract the residue after the first cooking and put it in a gourd. This they put in the hot sun until the contents are thoroughly dried. The result is a softer, not so strong-flavored, and more easily used salt which is called in the Boruca tongue *kʃ̃-kɔg*. This literally translated means "salt liver," as it is softer than the rock salt, and liver is one of the softest elements of the body.

252 Although the *Boruca* do not make many tortillas, they distinguish between those made of old corn and those made of sprouted corn (*maíz nacido*). They also make tortillas from green plantains, and from the fruit of the wild *ojoche tree* (see p. 7). Atol is made from rice and corn, and given to the babies when they are weaned. When rice is not dried on hides, [251] it is hung from the ceiling over the stove and smoked dry. Then it is put into a wooden mortar and husked, to be boiled when needed.

Plaintains are roasted with and without the skin. They are also fried. Green plantains are peeled and placed on hides in the sun to dry. They are then kept in a knotted string bag (see p. 18) in the kitchen. When the plantain has hung for sufficient time to be very, very dry, it is ground to a fine powder and used as a flour for making tortillas or tamales. A wooden knife is always employed to cut the [412] dried plantains, because if a steel knife is used, a black stain results and the flour, consequently, is colored.

Hen eggs are generally eaten, but occasionally a man will bring crocodile eggs from the river. These are cooked with *guayabo* (guava) leaves (see p. 6) to take away the strong taste. Foodstuffs (see p. 7) such as mushrooms, hearts of palm, and flowers, including the blossoms of the papaya and the *poró* tree, are usually boiled, cut up, and mixed with hen eggs. Sometimes meat is substituted for the eggs. The cob-like inflorescence of various

252 palms are boiled and fried. Another generally liked food is the tender leaf of the bean vine. This is prepared either with eggs or in soup.

Meat, fowl, and fish are frequently wrapped in the leaves of the *bijagua* (*Calathea insignis* Petersen). Another *Calathea* known as "black *bijagua*" is used interchangeably with the first kind. The food wrapped in the leaves is roasted on the hearth stones. There are various ways, however, of preparing different meats. Armadillo is often boiled or fried. Domestic and wild pig and venison are placed on top of three or four sticks over the hearth stones and roasted. Sometimes the flesh of these animals [251] is sun-dried and salted, or is smoked for preservation. Beef is almost never eaten, as the cattle the *Boruca* possess are not numerous and are in the hands of a very few; besides, since they are used for traction, they are economically too important to eat (see p. 23). Posole is a common dish and is made of dried meat, usually wild pig. The meat is chopped fine and cooked with corn. The combination is then ground. If this is boiled every night, it keeps for many days.

Shell fish is boiled, but fish, other than shell fish, is seldom eaten fresh. When it is, however, it is put into a soup, or roasted in leaves, or fried. As a rule the fish is cut into three [251] pieces and salted to be eaten when needed. If salt is not available, the fish is smoked and [757] saved. Smoked fish is said to be excellent for diarrhea.

372 **Fire-making.** The majority of the *Boruca* use matches, although a few of the older people occasionally use two sticks to start a fire. This is accomplished by taking a stick of pejibaye and rubbing it around and around in a small hole in a stick of *guácimo* (*Guazuma ulmifolia* Lam.), until sparks set the *guácimo* on fire. Some of the elders still talk of the stones which were formerly rubbed together to start fire, using a piece of cotton as a wick. These are not seen today.

In the bush, or in the fields, fire, which is all important among the *Boruca* for clearing purposes, is kept in an old tree trunk from day to day. This is done by throwing ashes over and around the fire to keep the embers hot and alive, much as is done in New England fireplaces at present.

3:Stone E-5 (1945) 1949
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Boruca

251 **Food Storage.** Corn is kept in large *habas* (see p. 15), in small raised-off-the-ground houses behind the main house, or on the wooden platforms, or *tabancos*, in the main house. The corn is shucked and left on the cob. Rice, unhusked, and various foodstuffs are also kept in these houses or on the more common *tabanco*. Eggs are hung in baskets of armadillo hide in the storage houses, or on the walls of the kitchen. Smoked fish and meat are also kept on *tabancos* in the kitchen, or hanging from the walls.

272 **Drinks.** *Tivia* (see p. 20), the liquid remaining from cocoa-butter, is drunk plain, or, [412]

FIG. 2. Wooden masher for chicha; size, length, 22 inches.

at times, ground corn, and, very seldom, ginger is added. *Tivia*, which is also called *kao*, is ground cacao that has been mixed with water, cooked, and beaten with water. It is taken plain without sugar, or it is mixed with roasted ripe plantains.

273 Chicha is made from old corn alone, or mixed with pejibaye, or with ripe or green plantains, or with ñampí, or with yuca, or with diverse starches.

Two kinds of corn chicha are made. One kind is made with a yeast, and consequently is known as *monsera*, which is the word for yeast. This chicha is used regularly at all celebrations, and in some houses almost daily. [832] The other corn chicha is given by wives to unfaithful husbands to keep them from looking at other women. This last kind is called *punsetti* in Spanish, or *twistʃa'* in Boruca. To make the ordinary chicha, whole kernels of corn are broken or crushed on the *tumba*, then left in water overnight. They are ground again, and the *masa*, or ground corn, is wrapped in a leaf or leaves, usually from the plantain, and boiled as a tamale. When cooked, it is left in the same leaf and hung as

[p. 10-A]

3:Stone E-5 (1945) 1949
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Boruca

273 a rule on the wall outside of the house, but sometimes inside the house, for three days (see fig. 5, *b*). It is then taken out and rewrapped in the same leaf but this time using the outer side of the leaf on the inside, and left for three more days hanging on the outside wall. If a yellow mold appears, it is still used, but not considered as good as without the mold. At the end of the three days, it is unwrapped again and left in the sun until it is thoroughly dried, when it is considered suitable to use as yeast in the chicha. When green plantains are used, the *Boruca* prefer to dry them on stones by the river instead of in the customary manner on hides by the houses. When dry, the plantains are ground and added to the corn to ferment. This also is considered *mohoso*, *monsera*, or yeast. When pejibaye, ñampí, yuca, or ripe plantains are used, they are cooked and then ground before being added to the corn.

The next step is to crack more corn, grind it, and let it soak overnight. It is then cooked until it starts to boil, when it is removed from the fire and mashed with a wooden masher (see fig. 2). Sufficient water is mixed with the corn to keep it from being either too hard or too soft. The grain is then mixed with the yeast. This concoction is left anywhere from six to fifteen days in *habas* lined with leaves. These *habas* are generally kept on the *tabancos*. At the end of the allotted time, the *baba* is taken to the river, and its contents emptied into gourds. Water is added to the paste which is pounded until it becomes soft. The chicha is usually kept in large earthenware jars, called *dʒe-bwĩ-griŋ'*, in a corner of the house, and [251] covered with leaves or a cloth to keep for further use.

The corn for *twistʃa'* is made from corn that is left to sprout in water. When it has sprouted, it is ground on the *tumbas*, or grinding stones, and then cooked in a pot, after which it is left in wooden trays, called by the Spanish name *bateas*, to cool. When cooled, the corn is chewed by the women and the residue is spit into a clay vessel. Here it is mixed with water and brown sugar is added. It is then strained, put into a vessel, and left to ferment. The fermentation often takes place over night.

[p. 10-B]

252 boiled or roasted in the ashes of the hearth. Young ears of maize when eaten are prepared in the first manner. Old maize, if not used for chicha (*see* Beverages), is roasted in the ashes or made into a thick mush, mixed with boiled plantains, wrapped in leaves and baked. Tortillas, other than those made from yuca or *pejibaye*, are rare. They are known only in [177] parts of lower Talamanca, where they are called "foreigner's bread," or in Salitre and Ujarrás, where the school has introduced them. Bananas and plantains are generally boiled or roasted in their skin but sometimes are boiled to make a dish known as *cukao* in Cabécar. A bitter chocolate paste is eaten alone or is added to roast plantains. Pumpkin seeds are roasted, peeled, and eaten.

[251] Meat is made into soup, roasted, or dried for later use. Fish is handled in a similar manner. Very little fried foods are consumed.

252 412 [171] The grinding of meal, whether from *pejibayes*, tubers, or maize, is distinct from the method common to Mesoamerica. As a rule, large natural boulders located beside creeks, rivers, or a water hole serve as the mealing stone. However, they are also found within the house (fig. 4, *a* and *b*). These grinding stones are generally utilized by several families. When such rocks are not available, a wide wooden plank, raised off the ground by logs, is used. The muller is a river stone and is as oval in shape as possible. Grinding is not done [171] by pushing forward and pulling backward as in western Central America and Mexico, but is accomplished by a side-to-side rocking movement which crushes the foodstuff. This process requires considerable strength and skill. Cacao is also ground in such a fashion and on boulders. At times, however, small raised-edge metates from ancient graves are used. In upper Talamanca, shallow wooden mortars are sometimes seen (*see* Wood and Stone).

372 **Fire-making.** Only in upper Talamanca, in particular among the Bribri, and in upper Chirripó is a wooden fire drill seen. A stick is twirled in a small hole made in a piece of [824] cacique wood (*Eugenia lepidota* Berg) and a bit of cotton is placed beneath it. The stick is twirled continuously until the cotton has been ignited. In most places fire is not allowed to die out or is covered with ashes to preserve

[see category 116 - END PLATE 3- ANALYST]

[P.16(A)] SA19 Talamanca SA19 Bribri Cabecar

372 it. Matches are fairly common outside of Alta
[177] Talamanca.

●251 **Food Storage.** Storage of food in a separate
[243] shelter is not practised except in lower Chiripó where the custom to grow maize as a cash crop is developing. It must be remembered that the principal diet of these people consists of tubers and *pejibayes*. It is not easy to preserve tubers for eating once they are pick-
[415] ed. Most foodstuffs are kept in net bags or hung on rafters, occasionally in bark containers, or dehydrated over the fire. This last method is the one used for keeping *pejibayes* during the months they are not in season. When needed, the dehydrated fruit is put in
[184] a pot and boiled. On the Pacific slope, how-
ever, such preservation of *pejibayes* is seldom
[262] practised. Here the people depend upon bananas and plantains during the lean months which in this area are from March to August.

272 **Beverages.** Contrary to popular opinion and the picture Spanish reports tend to draw, the most esteemed beverage among the Talamancan peoples is chocolate. This is the drink cited in their sacred theology (*see* Myths, *Theological Beliefs*) and the preferred drink given to the dead for their non-returnable
[796] journey. In fact, all ceremonies of any conse-
quence require chocolate. It is also the most
[574] appreciated drink to offer a friend or to give to people of importance. The drink is pre-

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P.16(B)--QUALIST]

## *HOUSES*

342 **House Types and Construction.** House types
[184] vary, depending upon the location. The orthodox Talamancan dwelling is large and round with a high conical roof of palm leaves, often with an old pot at the apex. In ancient times
175 it seems to have been a communal clan dwell-
342 ing called by the Spaniards a "palenque," whether or not there was a fence, housing up to three hundred people. The Spanish account furthermore reads:

[TEXT CONTINUES BOTTOM OF P.16(B)--QUALIST]

[74] Stone, 1949b, p. 10.

[75] De Espinosa, 1742, pp. 77–78. ". . . en que se con-
[361] gregan todos los de la familia de aquel linage, sin permitirse se mezcle uno con otro, y con esto se

[P. 18(A)] SA19 Talamanca SA19 Bribri Cabecar

354 **Furnishings.** In Talamanca, Chirripó, and Cabagra the hearth is made by placing tree trunks on the dirt floor with their ends together. The fire is kept going continuously and is not extinguished but covered with ashes when the family leave. During the night, someone shoves a trunk nearer to the center as it burns. In the large houses of the Bribri, there is a hearth for each wife (figs. 4, *c*; 6, *d*). This [252] is where she cooks for herself and her children as well as her husband. No house was seen with more than two hearths among the Cabécares (fig. 4, *d*). Over these fires wooden rods are suspended from the roof beams by pieces of *burio* (*Tiliaceae* sp., *see* Fibers). From these ● 251 rods hangs whatever needs drying, such as meat, seeds (usually in white *bijagua* leaves but occasionally in corn shucks), salt in black [824] *bijagua* (*Calathea* spp.) leaves, cacao pods for planting, plantains or bananas for ripening, 231 etc. A piece of hide from cattle or wild game is also hung from one of the rods and is used as food for the ever-present dogs when fresh 415 meat is lacking. Small *havas*,[1] made by men and 824 women from the vine called *kugəca* in Cabécar and *bejuco de hombre* in Spanish, or carrying nets made by women from *guarumo* (*Cecropia* spp.) fiber, are also suspended from the rods. They contain packages of salt wrapped in *bijagua* leaves and cacao pods. Hanging 352 shelves, called in Spanish *tabancos*, are rarely 177 seen in the large house. The fact that in Talamanca there is no word to designate these [192] shelves, other than the Bribri *koṇ*, meaning "place," suggests that here is a borrowed item, probably from the mestizos.

353 In this type of dwelling, the roof beams are important. Almost all things necessary for the family are stuck at random between the rungs of the roof construction or are hung from them (fig. 8, *a–c*). These necessities include food such as grains and fruits; carrying nets containing dried meat and tied tight with the stem of a plantain leaf; sieves made from gourds; forked sticks for lifting cooking ves- [272] sels; sticks with a number of little branches left for stirring chocolate; wooden spoons for stirring; chicken and wild turkey bones; hunting trophies; yeast for chicha wrapped in *bijagua* leaves; net bags with clay for making blow

[192] [1] "It is interesting to note that *kaLwa* is the word used in the upper Coen. It has a marked resemblance

[1] [i.e. carrying baskets – ANALYST]

[P 24(B)] SA19 Talamanca SA19 Bribri Cabecar

381 **Glues.** *See* Musical Instruments and Hunting.

281 **Skins.** There is relatively little use of cattle hide among these people. The Cabécares of the [231] Pacific slope who have most of the cattle, and rarely the Bribri and Cabécares of Talamanca, [415] make pouches or hunting bags from the sacs of bulls. The Pacific Cabécares also copy their non-indigenous neighbors in using skins to dry rice, beans, and cacao. Both wild pig and jaguar hide are made into pouches. Pieces of [824] deer hide are used for minute bags which [777] contain good luck seeds to put on children's necklaces. In upper Talamanca men (chiefly [292] medicine men) wear deer and jaguar skins over their clothing on festive occasions. Peccary [534] hide is used to cover drums on the Pacific slope and iguana skin is used on the Caribbean side.

314 **Rubber.** On the Caribbean slope, rubber is 824 tapped from the wild tree (*Castilla fallax* O. F. Cook) by the Cabécares and made into pouches (*see* Hunting).

322 **Wood and Stone.** Wood, of course, has a variety of uses many of which have been mentioned earlier. Among the Bribri of the [252] Caribbean littoral, grinding tables are often made of wood and are large enough for several women to use at the same time. They are located beside a water hole or stream and are balanced on logs. On the Caribbean side, [415] mahogany or cedar mixing trays or troughs, [273] up to twelve feet in length and supported by four feet, are used for chicha mash (*see* Furnishings). Vertical wooden mortars for rice, [412] shallow mortars, and large trays or bowls are [415] common. These last two items are used for drying foodstuffs or even for mixing paste [251] with water. Wooden staffs known as *cacique* [252] sticks are an important part of the medicine man's equipment (*see* Special Paraphernalia and Significance).

372 In upper Talamanca, the fire stick is used (*see* Fire-making).

324 Stone is not worked today but is employed 287 for food preparation and the manufacture of bark cloth.